



Foreign Agricultural Service

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Market Brief - Product Specific Import Regulations Lebanon : Exporter Guide

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Report Highlights:

The Lebanese market is open to all suppliers of consumer goods. An import license is not required for most food products. Labeling requirements are simple. The standards and regulations are not rigid. Inspection procedures are minimal. The domestic distribution system is efficient. Competition is high.

SECTION I. MARKET OVERVIEW

The Lebanese market is open to all suppliers of consumer goods and import rules are much more liberal than other countries of the region. The importers do not usually need any import license. The supply of goods is adequate but the purchasing power of the average consumer is rather limited. Although the civil war has ended and the country is rebuilding, there are practically no statistics on the economy in general and even foreign trade statistics are not up to date.

Advantages	Challenges
Fascination with American culture (language, music, TV shows) carries to American food	European suppliers are very interested in this free economy and compete with U.S. products
the growing food processing industry is looking for new imported food ingredients	Freight cost from the U.S. is much higher than from Europe
Domestic distribution systems are efficient	Local production of some types of products such as snack foods is developing fast
This market supplies other markets in the area with products not permitted to be imported in those countries	

SECTION II. EXPORTER BUSINESS TIPS

Local importers usually contact foreign suppliers and establish a business relationship. The importer usually tries a limited quantity of the product for the first time to test its marketability in the local market. The importer usually advertises for the product over the different mass media, especially television. Lebanese importers usually request a dealership relation not only for Lebanon but for other neighboring countries too.

Food standards and regulations are not rigid. Inspection procedures are minimal.

The general consumer tastes is similar to other countries of the Middle East, with a special emphasis on avoiding the use of pork and lard by most of the consumers.

The label has to include the name of the producer, country of origin, net weight, date of production, date of expiry/validity, and ingredients. Labels in English and French are acceptable. However, a small description of the contents of food packs must be present in Arabic on imported packed foods. The label has to be attached to the container at the time of production in the form of a sticker or the container pack can be printed with the required information.

SECTION III. MARKET SECTOR STRUCTURE AND TRENDS

The Lebanese market growth is associated with other factors in the Middle East area. Lebanon is beginning to rebuild its former role in tourism. Consumption of food products will increase with the increase in income of the Lebanese and with the flow of large numbers of tourists who come year-round to visit Lebanon and who will create a big demand for high value processed goods and raw materials for the hotel industry. Lebanon had a very sophisticated tourist industry during the sixties through the mid-seventies. Beirut's supermarkets and hotels are rapidly expanding.

Internet sales are also possible in Lebanon because the goods can be cleared from customs without the need for an import permit.

SECTION IV. BEST HIGH-VALUE PRODUCT PROSPECTS

Snack foods, chocolate, potato chips, roasted nuts (almonds, pistachios, and peanuts), candies, ice cream, frozen meat and fish, cake mixes, sauces, salad dressings, fruit juices, catsup, mustard. The market for ready made microwavable foods such as pizzas is also developing.

SECTION V. KEY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

For further help, the Commercial Section of the American Embassy in Beirut can be contacted: phone: (961-4) 402200 and 4033001, fax: (961-4) 416502.